



# HILLBROOK HILITES

Hillbrook-Tall Oaks Civic Association (HTOCA) Newsletter

September 2023

## NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK PARTY & POTLUCK TO KICK OFF FALL SOCIAL SEASON

**We hope a little rain in the forecast won't deter neighbors for coming out to our biggest social event of the year!**

Sponsored by the Hillbrook-Tall Oaks Civic Association (HTOCA), our annual Neighborhood Block Party and Potluck is still happening, rain or (more preferably) shine. We will be partying from 4-7 p.m. in **Dann Winter's** front yard at the corner of Kingston Drive and Silver Lane. We're pulling out all of the stops this year:

- Live music by Paper Airplanes. Thanks to **Betsy Martin** for introducing us to the coolest band in town
- Carnival games and a popcorn machine organized by **Alisha Martinez**. Games include plinko, ring toss, milk can and tip-a-troll
- Cornhole, jump ropes, chalk drawing and other amusements
- Visits from fire truck, police officers and other emergency vehicles (all pending availability)
- Water, soft drinks and adult beverages, including complimentary beer and wine

This is a potluck event, so we encourage neighbors to please bring a main dish, side, snack or dessert to share. Please also bring serving utensils if needed for your dish. HTOCA will supply plates, napkins, cups and plasticware.

Stop by the HTOCA tables to say hello, confirm that we have your latest contact information for the upcoming Neighborhood Directory, and pay your annual dues. You can even meet some of our candidates running for election this year.

**This is just the beginning of a series of events in the coming months, so please also mark your calendars for:**

- **HTOCA Annual Meeting:** Sunday, September 24 - 7 p.m.  
*virtual link coming soon*
- **DC Slices Food Truck:** Saturday, October 21 - 5:30-7:30 p.m.  
*in front of 4909 Kingston Drive*
- **Halloween / Oktoberfest:** Sunday, October 29 - 3-5 p.m.  
*Colburn Drive cul-de-sac, parade begins at Dodson/Colburn*



*Paper Airplanes, back again by popular demand*

### Also In This Issue...

- Know Thy Neighbors: Meet Dan & Olivier!
- Community Yard Sale Recap
- Leaf Collection Proposed Changes
- HTOCA Election Candidates
- Leaf Blower Etiquette
- Women's Wellness Group Updates
- Slowing Down Speeders
- Annandale HS Tag Sale

... and more!

## KNOW THY NEIGHBORS: MEET DANIEL & OLIVIER!

New neighbors Dan Commins and Olivier Lamy got a taste of the “wild” life in Hillbrook-Tall Oaks on their very first evening home when a fox and a deer stopped by their backyard to say hello! Here is their story:



*Photos courtesy of Dan Commins*

**Who’s in your household?** We are a French-American family of three. Olivier works at the Department of Homeland Security. Dan works at the Federal Aviation Administration. This July, we adopted our adorable golden retriever puppy Charlie from the Fairfax County Animal Shelter.

**How long have you lived in the Hillbrook-Tall Oaks neighborhood?** We bought our house in April and moved in at the end of May.

**Where are you originally from?**

Olivier is originally from Normandy, France. Dan grew up outside of Boston. After living in Alexandria for a year, we spent six years in Paris before moving back to DC in 2014, where we spent most of our time at our condo in Adams Morgan.

**Any interesting memories from living here so far?**

We were surprised and excited by the friendliness of the folks in the neighborhood who came to say hi as we were moving in. Eating dinner in our backyard on the first evening we were amazed to see a fox and a deer in the yard.

**What has been your favorite part about living in Hillbrook-Tall Oaks?**

The peace and quiet, and quality of life so close to the city. Having spent the last eight years in DC, we needed a reprieve from the hustle and bustle and noise of city life. The woods and greenery here are incredible. It’s so nice to see and hear wild animals around and to have such friendly people saying hi as we’re out walking with Charlie.

**What advice do you have for your fellow residents?**

Take care of and appreciate this amazing neighborhood! It’s rare to find such a beautiful, pleasant and quiet spot so accessible to everything. We look forward to growing roots here and building relationships with our neighbors.



## COMMUNITY YARD SALE A MASSIVE HIT

**Twenty-five households across Hillbrook-Tall Oaks participated in an HTOCA-sponsored community yard sale on August 26.** The idea came from neighbors who thought more people would attend a yard sale in the neighborhood if they could get more houses to sell their goods. Neighbor **Thuraya Kent** of Pacific Lane planned and organized this very popular event.

Having the participating neighbors hold their yard sales on the same date allowed for a coordinated advertising effort instead requiring each resident to do their own. A webpage was created and featured a map of participating homes. Onsite, each participant also posted a QR code that linked to the map so that shoppers could easily find the next participating home. So with one trip to the neighborhood, serious bargain hunters could visit 25 sales within a few blocks.

“I was nervous that people wouldn’t show,” said **Kent**. “When you advertise, it’s hard to know if you are truly reaching people.”

Kent’s jitters went away around 7:20 a.m. “We weren’t supposed to start until 8 a.m. but people started strolling down my driveway much earlier, when we were still setting up.”

Several participating neighbors considered the yard sale a success. Since participants just pulled items out of their home to a curb or driveway, the logistics were easy.

This was the first community yard sale in recent memory so the HTOCA board welcomes your feedback. **Please share any feedback you have to [hillbrooktalloaks@gmail.com](mailto:hillbrooktalloaks@gmail.com), and let us know if you would like to make this an annual event.**

Questions?

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## NEW NEIGHBORHOOD DIRECTORY COMING SOON

Got a new phone number or email address since December 2020?  
Know someone who recently moved in (or out) or the neighborhood?

Please send any updates to [hillbrooktalloaks@gmail.com](mailto:hillbrooktalloaks@gmail.com) to ensure we have your latest information for the next Neighborhood Directory. We plan to print and deliver new directories to every home no later than December.

Thanks to all of our neighbor advertisers - we appreciate you. Special thanks to **Earle Whitmore**, who generously agreed to pay for all our printing costs again this year. We couldn’t do it without you!

## FAIRFAX COUNTY LEAF COLLECTION MAY BE DISCONTINUED AFTER THIS SEASON

Anyone who has lived here for at least one autumn knows that with the beautiful landscape and tree canopy also comes the labor we work hard to keep up with: frequent leaf raking, bagging and dragging them to the curb.

Luckily Hillbrook-Tall Oaks has been able to count on Fairfax County's curbside leaf collection services, which includes three pickups per year between November and January. While pandemic staffing shortages and equipment issues created challenges for the county's Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES), we still received two pickups per year these last few years.

**We have learned, however, that this season's leaf collection might be Fairfax County's last.** DPWES has proposed terminating the leaf vacuum services it provides to 25,000 residents after each fall, citing rising costs, staffing shortages and ongoing operational issues. The county sent a survey this summer seeking input on the recommendation, which we forwarded to residents to encourage sharing their feedback and concerns.

"During the 2022-2023 season, the program experienced numerous setbacks including collection delays, staffing shortages, a larger volume of leaves than normal, and inclement weather," DPWES said in a news release. "After assessing the service, county staff propose to discontinue vacuum leaf service when the upcoming season concludes, along with the tax imposed for the service."

A FFX Now article published on July 19 noted anticipated deficits of \$900,000 during the 2023 season and another \$400,000 predicted for 2024 to provide these services. It also noted that the service conflicts with the county's adopted sustainability policies to reduce waste and greenhouse gas emissions. Currently DPWES grinds up the collected leaves into mulch that's distributed at various sites for free.

**The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors plans on making a final decision this fall. It's not too late to weigh in on the proposed discontinuation: Leave a voicemail or text "leaf collection" to 703-890-5898, project code 2159.**



## WOMEN'S WELLNESS GROUP UPDATE

The Women's Wellness Group enjoyed several walks and yoga sessions this season as well as its annual summer pool party! The group's last social gathering will be assembling treat bags for the children attending Halloween / Oktoberfest.

If you are interested in contributing to the treat bags or attending the stuffing party, please contact Group Organizer **Alisha Martinez** ([alishakmartinez@gmail.com](mailto:alishakmartinez@gmail.com) or 617-290-0728) for more details.

The group's final neighborhood walk will be on Saturday, November 11 from 8:30-9:15 a.m. where they meet at Poe Middle School (Exit 2) for a two mile walk around the neighborhood. All are welcome.

Did you see Annandale High School students decked out in Atom spirit wear canvassing the neighborhood today? This year the Performing Arts Department's band, orchestra, chorus and theatre joined forces to raise funds for this academic year's programs, which includes guest artists and coaches, field trips, new instruments and class materials.

**It's not too late to donate! Scan the QR code below or on the tag they left on your door** to consider donating funds to this worthy cause for our community's public high school students.

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**TAG DAY** JOIN IN ON THE BIGGEST FUNDRAISER OF THE YEAR!

**WHAT IS TAG DAY?**

Every Performing Arts student takes part into visiting the entire geographic district of Annandale High for financial support. We gather around to receive donations or to leave a tag with a request for financial support.

With this we allow to bring guest artists and coaches, field trips, new instruments, classroom materials and more!

•••WE LOOK FOR PARENT/GUARDIAN VOLUNTEERS TO DRIVE GROUPS OF 3-4 STUDENTS TO DESIGNATED NEIGHBORHOODS FOR DOOR-TO-DOOR CANVASSING. •••

ARRIVE BY 8:45 •••  
& MAKE SURE TO WEAR ANNANDALE ATOM SPIRIT WEAR.

**SATURDAY, SEP. 16**  
**9:30 AM - 4:30 PM**  
**@ Annandale High Band Room**

**SIGN UP AT:**  
[tinyurl.com/PerfArtsTagDay23](https://tinyurl.com/PerfArtsTagDay23)

## HELP SLOW DOWN SPEEDERS IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Speeding down the streets of Hillbrook-Tall Oaks is an ongoing issue. Getting stop signs posted some years ago has helped but the problem persists, endangering ourselves and our families, especially our kids.

Your HTOCA Board has worked throughout the year with the Fairfax County Police to curtail irresponsible driving, and police have issued citations to violators when traffic patrol teams have been available to monitor our neighborhood. But the Fairfax Police are stretched thin - receiving 30,000 calls for police services year to date - and can't be here nearly as often as needed. So the Board is trying something new.

Several "little green men" with the message to drive slowly have been purchased, and the board is currently looking for home owners who would like to take responsibility to place them on the street each day in front of their homes. We also put up the "Drive Like Your Kids Live Here" signs throughout the neighborhood in time for the annual back-to-school and -work rush.

Our hope is that having these scattered around the neighborhood will help deter aggressive driving. The board is looking for volunteers to simply place green men or signs on the street each day and then store them on their property at night. **Might you be able to participate with this project? If so, please email us at [hillbrooktalloaks@gmail.com](mailto:hillbrooktalloaks@gmail.com).**



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## FAIRFAX POLICE OFFER ADVICE TO DETER UNWANTED SOLICITORS

Most of us have experienced unwanted solicitors at our door. They're the aggressive sales representatives selling some type of service related to our property. They typically start with, "We're here doing work on your neighbor's home and since our team is here now, we're able to offer you a discount today to work on yours."

The services run the gamut: gutter cleaning, tree trimming, pest control, window replacement. Some are legitimate; others are downright scams. And often, the representatives are pushy and won't take "no" for an answer. If you are not interested, the challenge is finding a way to quickly get them off your property in a manner that is both respectful and effective.

**Here's a helpful tip from the Fairfax County Police: Ask to see their Fairfax County Solicitors License.** If they can't produce one, they are in violation of Chapter 31 of the Fairfax County Code, which "requires that peddlers or vendors selling goods or services door-to-door...obtain a Solicitors License...issued by Department of Cable and Consumer Services, Regulation and Licensing Branch." The regulations require vendors to obtain this license to sell virtually all the services typically performed. Furthermore, "Solicitors are also required to leave the premises when asked by any prospective customer..." Notably, soliciting without a license is considered a criminal offense in Fairfax, and violators may be charged with a Class 2 Misdemeanor. Odds are that very few of these vendors are in compliance with this significant regulation.

## ENJOYING AUTUMN IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD: BASIC LEAF BLOWER ETIQUETTE

They're as perennial as autumn leaves and jack o'lanterns: leaf blowers . . . and the wave of complaints about their noise. Noisy leaf blowers, particularly the backpack-type gas ones, have become a standard year-round tool for homeowners as well as for the lawn maintenance crews that operate regularly in our neighborhood.

Autumn is high season in our leafy community. From now until the snow falls, the sound of leaf blowers will be in the air somewhere in the neighborhood nearly every waking hour. It's tough for neighbors who want to enjoy a quiet cup of coffee and the paper outside on a fine fall morning, or carry on a casual conversation with friends on the back deck on a crisp, clear autumn afternoon. Leaf blowers typically generate 85-100 decibels, so whenever there is one running every neighbor within a half-mile will have to listen to it.

This took on an added dimension with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and more of us working from home. It always seems that the lawn crew next door starts blasting away with three leaf blowers at once just as you're getting on your most important Zoom call of the week. It has generated hundreds of online memes, advice column inquiries, and published articles, including this bit of [humor](#) from The Wall Street Journal. It has also resulted in outright prohibitions on the use of leaf blowers in several major cities and hundreds of communities across the country.

Fortunately, we live in a community where we all try to be considerate of one another, and there are ways to do that where leaf blowers are concerned. Larry Will, a former VP for Engineering at Echo, Inc. and the inventor of the "quiet" series of Echo leaf blowers—has written a presentation and pamphlet entitled [Leaf Blowers: A Guide to Safe and Courteous Use](#). There are lots of helpful hints, but most of it is just common sense and basic courtesy. Here is a summary of key points to keep in mind that you can pass along to your lawn maintenance contractor if you use one.

- **Replace older model leaf blowers with current models that feature noise-suppression technologies; choose a leaf blower rated at 65 dB (A) or less**
- **Only run the blower as long and at throttle settings necessary to do the job; rarely does a large backpack blower have to run at full throttle in a residential area**
- **Be a considerate and courteous operator; always be mindful of bystanders and adjoining property**
- **Avoid blowing dust, gravel or other debris**
- **Use only one leaf blower at any given time**
- **Know and observe Fairfax County's leaf blower ordinances**
- **Do not use leaf blowers late in the evening or early in the morning**

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## HTOCA BOARD ELECTIONS: 2023-2024

Our fiscal year comes to an end on September 30, so it's time to elect your next HTOCA Board of Directors. Here are biographies for this year's director and officer candidates, which includes both new and long-time neighbor residents and volunteers. A link to vote arrived to your inbox on September 9.

Please make your voice heard by voting no later than September 24!

### OFFICER CANDIDATES:



**President: Bob Selim** - Bob and Rena Selim moved into Hillbrook-Tall Oaks in 1993. Their daughters attended local Fairfax County public schools from Columbia Elementary through Poe Middle School and Annandale High School. Bob worked at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History for 15 years, then went out on his own to help develop and write exhibitions for history museums around the country. He has served one term as treasurer for HTOCA and is happy to help out as president this time around. Most days, you can see him walking his dog, Murray, around the neighborhood.



**Vice President: Ferrell Cook** - Ferrell's family moved to Hillbrook-Tall Oaks in August 2008 from New Orleans. He currently resides at 4909 Dodson Drive with his fiancé Katrina Clemons. Ferrell truly enjoys this area for the camaraderie experiences of the social events and the overall beauty of the area. Ferrell's career discipline has been in law enforcement and security for more than 30 years, and he currently serves as the security director at a luxury brand hotel in Washington, D.C. His hobbies are driving America's only sport car, attending concerts from jazz to rock and auto racing events such as NASCAR to Grand Prix. As a current Board member, Ferrell also serves on the recently resurrected Neighborhood Watch Committee. He has a deep knowledge of this community, its residents, and most importantly, safety and security, along with a few ideas on emergency preparedness, etc., for the community.



**Secretary: Danielle Brosious** - Danielle is a Virginia resident of seven years, and a Hillbrook-Tall Oaks resident since 2019. She has served on the Board of Directors since 2022. Danielle lives in the blue house on Colburn Drive with her husband, Dan Boyd, and their lively toddler, Bruno. Danielle is a classically trained musician and prior to having her son was an elementary music teacher with Alexandria City Public Schools. She is a caregiver and supportive person at heart and would love to continue to be of service to this wonderful community



# HTOCA BOARD ELECTIONS: 2023-2024

## OFFICER CANDIDATES, continued:



**Treasurer: Richard Gill** - Richard is a long-standing member of the community, with a rich history of community involvement and a deep love for the neighborhood. He and his wife, Kay, have been proud residents of the community since 1993. Over the years, they have witnessed the growth and transformation of the neighborhood into the close-knit community it is today. Richard's dedication to his family and the community is evident in his role as a father. He and Kay raised two daughters here, both of whom have gone on to have successful careers. Before retiring, Richard enjoyed a fulfilling career at the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) as an attorney. His legal expertise and commitment to fairness and integrity were integral to his work. Now retired, he hopes to apply his skills and passion for community service to benefit HTOCA.

## DIRECTOR CANDIDATES



**Mark Crawford** - Mark currently serves as a director on the HTOCA Board. He has been active in a range of matters affecting Hillbrook-Tall Oaks, including tracking the loss of trees and identifying substitute trees to plant, performing patrols for Neighborhood Watch, engaging with police on noise problems in downtown Annandale, and monitoring development at the K-Market shopping center. Previously he was president for three years, vice president for one year, and has served as a director. His goals for the coming year include helping preserve the quality of life in the neighborhood, reporting on zoning issues, supporting actions to bolster safety for all residents, and monitoring pertinent activity and events in Mason District and Fairfax County.



**Linda Friar** - Linda moved here in April 2019 after relocating from Deerfield Beach, Florida. She has enjoyed the many community activities and participating in the Garden Club. Linda would be honored to bring her background in land-use planning and community development to the Board. As a participant on a neighborhood board in Florida, she appreciates all the great work that volunteers have done to create a vibrant neighborhood and knows how important these organizations are. Linda works in public relations for the Bureau of Reclamation and holds a master's degree in public administration and urban planning. She has been an Adjunct Professor teaching environmental planning and sustainable city design for 18 years. She is a nationally certified planner through the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP). She also spends time volunteering at several local theaters and enjoys walking during good weather.

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## HTOCA BOARD ELECTIONS: 2023-2024

### DIRECTOR CANDIDATES, continued:



**Joe Kennedy** - Joe is a software sales technologist specializing in large-scale data warehousing and business intelligence. He has been involved in multiple fraternal and civic organizations over the years, most recently serving as president of his college fraternity alumni association. Joe has been a resident of Hillbrook-Tall Oaks since 1962, when his family purchased the house on Kingston Drive. He delivered newspapers for the Washington Star in the 1970s and did yard work for many houses on Kingston Drive. When his parents decided the house and yard were too big for them, Joe and his wife, Michelle, purchased from them. They have raised five children in the same house he grew up in.



**Absolon "Al" Kent** - Absolon is a small business owner, active volunteer, and instructor in the Annandale community. He is a United States Navy retiree with a bachelor's degree from Savannah State University and a master's degree from the University of Oklahoma. He moved with his family to Annandale in 2012 and to the Hillbrook-Tall Oaks Community in 2018. He joined the HTOCA Board in 2022.



**Jacquie Mosely** - Jacquie, her husband, Ben, and their young son, Fletcher, moved to Kingston Drive from Washington, D.C., in 2020 and have since added another son, Jed. Jacquie and Ben fell in love with Hillbrook's trees and foliage—you've likely seen Ben out in their yard, as he's a landscape enthusiast. Born and raised in another great Annandale neighborhood, Jacquie has grown to appreciate the vibrancy of Hillbrook-Tall Oaks (so many young kids!) and enjoyed getting to know residents through participation in the Women's Wellness Group and neighborhood events. She currently leads government relations for a diversified financial services company after spending (too much) time on Capitol Hill. In her spare time, Jacquie enjoys reading, taking long walks through the neighborhood, and attending concerts with Ben.



**Al Sample** - Al and his wife, Dory, have been active members of the neighborhood since their arrival in 1990. He has been on the HTOCA Board for eight years, serving as president for the last six. Professionally, Al is Adjunct Professor of Environmental Science and Policy at George Mason University and a member of the National Academy of Sciences Board on Agriculture and Natural Resources.